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Mark Twain and Hank Morgan:

A Microscopic Atom of Faith.

by

William Isham Stearns

B.A. Colby College, 1987

presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements


for the degree of

Master of Arts

The University of Montana

1998

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Mark Twain and Hank Morgan: A Microscopic Atom of Faith. (67 pp)

Director: William Bevis



From its publication in 1889, Mark Twain's novel *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* had been accepted as a fanciful satire of Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*. Since 1960, *A Connecticut Yankee* has received increased scholarly attention as Twain's most critically troublesome work.

Modern scholarship has been concerned with the causes and results of Twain's intended and unintended meanings of the novel. Among other issues, critical debate is divided as to whether the novel is an endorsement of American democratic, technological and moral progress compared with Arthurian and, by implication, nineteenth century England, or whether the novel is an indictment of America's failure to progress beyond the social structures of traditional English institutions. Further contention surrounds the extent to which Twain is or is not identified with the novel's protagonist, Hank Morgan.

Within the context of late nineteenth century American culture and politics, *A Connecticut Yankee* addresses America's unstable social climate. Marked by economic, political and cultural conflicts, Gilded Age America struggled to achieve social unity. In *A Connecticut Yankee*, Twain confabulates the conditions of Gilded Age America with those of Arthurian England in order to show the potential danger of American ideals of progress in relation to the social conflicts American progress produced. In his fable, Twain attempted to impart a moral lesson in which American civilization could find unity.

Despite his ambivalent relationship with American high culture, Twain embraced genteel culture's ideals for social reform which emphasized a belief in culture as a station of traditional Victorian morality achieved through middle class modesty and domestic harmony.

Through Hank Morgan, Twain satirizes the ideals of chivalric culture and exposes the hypocrisy of the Gilded Age's genteel social reformers. Furthermore, Twain uses Hank Morgan, the embodiment of America's proudest cultural attributes, to undermine the very American ideals Hank Morgan represents. By extending his American attributes to their logical extreme, Twain portrays their potential danger in Hank Morgan's destructive fury in the Battle of the Sand Belt. Although Hank Morgan shills some of Twain's ephemeral political convictions, Twain presents Hank Morgan as an object of his disgust with Gilded Age culture.

Viewed in conjunction with William Dean Howells "campaign for realism" in Gilded Age literature, *A Connecticut Yankee* appears as a literary trick. Howells loathed popular dime novels and sentimental romances because they failed to portray real life or a moral universe. Sold by subscription to a wide audience, *A Connecticut Yankee* mimicked dime novel conventions and attitudes while it affirmed genteel culture's favored middle class morality in Hank Morgan's death-bed longing for his wife and child.

Introduction

Upon publication in 1889, Mark Twain's novel, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, was favorably received by American critics. In a review for the *Boston Sunday Herald* (December 15 1889), Sylvester Baxter praised the novel as a "delicious" product of Twain's "fruitful imagination" (Baxter 321). Baxter recognized that Twain "ruthlessly expos[ed] in their literal ugliness the illusively mantled facts" of Arthurian legend as well as "parallels of the inhumanities" that exist in nineteenth century America and abroad. Despite recognizing Twain's contemporary criticisms of nineteenth century American life, Baxter took the opportunity of his review to celebrate the coextensive moral progress of industrial civilization:

How the conscience and sympathies of the world have quickened with the advent of the railway, the steamship and the telegraph! We have, after all, but just passed out across the threshold of the dark ages, and, in view of the few short steps we have taken, we can hardly doubt that we are yet to make an infinitely mightier progress into the light of a genuine civilization, putting far behind us the veneered barbarism of the present, that still retains the old standards of conduct and intercourse for our guidance in all 'practical' affairs. (Baxter 322)

Baxter accepted contemporary ideals correlating moral progress with industrial progress and read *A Connecticut Yankee* as a boastful endorsement of the overall progress of American civilization relative to ancient and contemporary British and European civilizations. Despite his recognition of the "veneered barbarism of the present", Baxter accepted the prevalent American faith in the ideology of progress that correlated material, industrial advances with ideal, moral progress.

In a letter to Twain preceding *A Connecticut Yankee's* publication, William Dean Howells heartily praised the work as "charming, original, wonderful -- good in fancy, and sound to the core in morals" (Kaplan 301). Howells, Twain's literary adviser and close friend, appreciated the novel's "elastic scheme" which allowed it to play freely between sixth century England and nineteenth century America "where our civilization of to-day is mirrored in the cruel barbarism of the past, the same in principle and only softened in custom" (Howells 124-5). In his 1890 review in *Harper's*, Howells acknowledged the contemporary targets of *A Connecticut Yankee* and observed that "the laws are still made for the few against the many, and that the preservation of things, not men, is still the ideal of legislation" (Ensor 326).

Howells enjoyed the fanciful satire at the expense of Arthur's Court but was more concerned with the novel's contemporary insights. According to Howells, *A Connecticut Yankee* wrenched the heart for the "cruelty and wrong in the past" but also left it "burning with shame and hate for the conditions which are of like effect in the present" (Ensor 327). For Howells, *A Connecticut Yankee* was "the most matter of fact

narrative, for it is always true to human nature, the only truth possible, the only truth essential, to fiction" (Ensor 327). A Christian socialist concerned chiefly with equality, morality and character, Howells found Twain's fantasy agreeable and compelling in its stark, realistic rendering of human nature across the centuries. In contrast to Baxter, Howells was less content with American civilization's supposed advances resulting from industrial progress and unalloyed by the promise of a better future. Howells and Baxter's responses to *A Connecticut Yankee* effectively previewed the succeeding critical debate for Twain's most controversial novel.

Twentieth century criticism of *A Connecticut Yankee* is wide ranging but divided essentially into two camps. In his article "The Meaning of *A Connecticut Yankee*," Everett Carter classifies Twain scholars as "hard" critics and "soft" critics (Carter 434-5). "Hard" critics interpret the novel as an attack on a sentimental view of the past, and "soft" critics read the novel as "either ambivalent or an attack on technology and the American faith in material progress." Carter derives these terms from contemporary debate about interpretations of Cervantes' *Don Quixote* in which hard critics insist upon the novel's "defense of reality," while soft critics interpret the novel as a "defense of the dauntless power of the imagination to remake reality nearer the dream" (Carter 435). In view of the novel's romantic conclusion, other critics contend that *A Connecticut Yankee* praises technological advancement but eulogizes America's lost innocence in the wake of industrial capitalism.

Hard and soft critics generally agree with Henry Nash Smith's assessment that *A Connecticut Yankee* is an artistic failure, although the failure of a great writer. Citing the novel's inconsistent and illogical portrayal of Hank Morgan, its lack of overall unity and, especially, the macabre violence of the Battle of the Sand Belt, scholars of *A Connecticut Yankee* are harder pressed than Twain was to render this fanciful fable whole, let alone discern Twain's purported intent. Further critical debate is concerned with the extent to which Mark Twain is or is not identified with Hank Morgan and Morgan's views concerning democracy and industrial progress. There is little question, as Louis Budd shows in *Mark Twain: Social Philosopher*, that Hank Morgan espouses Twain's populist views of democracy but whether or not Twain shares Morgan's dauntless enthusiasm for industrial technology as a vehicle for moral progress is not as clear.

Further complicating these issues are Twain's own shifting convictions involving both his hopes for democracy and his skeptical observations concerning the wisdom of the masses and their often cowardly, herd-like mentality. Certainly, when Hank Morgan rages, "Sometimes I'd like to hang the whole human race and finish the farce" (CY 302), it is an expression of Twain's growing disgust with American civilization based on his perception that human nature had failed to progress along with the noble ideals it had imagined for itself and its technological advancements. Although Mark Twain and Hank Morgan maintain similar opinions, Mark Twain is not Hank Morgan, and Hank Morgan is not Mark Twain. In fact, Hank Morgan is Mark Twain's whipping boy for America's Gilded Age democracy.

Twain does not share Hank Morgan's unquestioned faith in democracy. During the 1870's, Twain railed against "this wicked ungodly suffrage" that extended voting rights equally to ignorant men and men of "education and industry," and that this attempt to "equalize what God has made unequal was a wrong and a shame" (Kaplan 168). In "The Curious Republic of Gondour" (1875), Twain suggested expanding voting laws to grant five or ten votes each to men of education, property and achievement. Twain's view of democracy bears an aristocratic taint itself provoking William Dean Howells' to comment that Twain was a "theoretical socialist and a practical aristocrat" (Kaplan 287). Though Twain ridicules genteel cultural pretenses and codes, he shares American genteel culture's fears and contempt for the Hank Morgans in nineteenth century American society.

In *A Connecticut Yankee*, Twain turns his disgust with American society on his ostensible American hero, Hank Morgan. Hank Morgan is a synecdoche for the attributes Twain found most promising and most damaging to American society. At the same time that he stands for America's most cherished democratic principles and native attributes, he also represents the chicanery and hypocrisy of the political Boss, the self-interested and ruthless practices of the American Businessman and the naivete and potential danger of unalloyed faith in rationality and the ideology of Progress. Ultimately, Hank Morgan is a hypocrite and the object of Twain's scorn for the lack of moral progress in relation to the material progress of American society.

As in *Huckleberry Finn*, *Puddin'head Wilson* and *The Mysterious Stranger*, Twain addressed the human race's ontological status in *A Connecticut Yankee*. Twain weighed the concepts "nature" and "training" in order to discuss the human race's historical failure to achieve a just and reasonable society. For Twain, "nature" is based on his deistic assumption that God created humans as inherently just and reasonable beings, and training accounts for the social and environmental influences that over-ride humans' just and reasonable natures. In contrast to his own Calvinist training, Twain, an autodidact, was a reluctant but, eventually, enthusiastic student of Darwin, who challenged his beliefs that human civilization was divinely created, inherently good and reasonable (Crews 62-4). In *A Connecticut Yankee*, Twain sought evidence to affirm his deistic belief, enabling him to believe that America's industrial progress promised a better future. But Twain was unable to compile satisfactory historical evidence to believe that mankind is inherently just and reasonable. In conjunction with family trauma and financial crises, this crisis of faith precipitated his later dark writings and provoked his infamous dictum that the human race is damned. Despite his historical observations and contemporary criticisms, however, Twain maintained a microscopic atom of faith in his hope for the human race.

Published in 1889, Mark Twain's novel *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* emerges from the heart of America's industrial transformation and encapsulates the social conflicts of the age as well as Twain's struggles with the resulting social, political and moral questions. Marked by strife between capital and labor, an ever widening

gap between the rich and poor, and unprecedented levels of immigration, America's Gilded Age provided a contentious forum for social and political conflicts over the future of America. In response to America's increasingly impersonal modern society, Twain was a jingoistic democrat and an adherent to technological progress as well as a humanist who revealed the tension between modern American society's professed ideals of democracy, equality and freedom, and the practices and all-too-human failures that served to undermine those ideals.

A Connecticut Yankee represents Twain's attempt to mediate between his own idealization of democracy and industrial progress, and his observations of democracy's failures and industrial technology's adverse effects on American morality. *A Connecticut Yankee* presents these conflicts as questions of faith, faith in the inherent goodness and moral perfectibility of mankind, and faith in the technological progress of the industrial revolution as a vehicle for the progress of mankind. Finally, unable to reconcile the contradictions between America's most glorious ideals and the results of American industrial development, Twain retreated and offered a simple moral message as a means to preserve his own ideal of America. With Hank Morgan as the subject of his exploration, Twain, despite his ambivalent attitudes toward American genteel culture's Victorian moralism, offered simple domestic harmony as a remedy to nineteenth century America's moral decline.

In *A Connecticut Yankee*, Twain was uncertain whether or not the human race and America was damned by the force of history and human nature. Twain hoped that technological progress would engender moral

progress, but he struggled to find corroborating evidence in nineteenth century America. The "elastic scheme" of the novel, superimposing nineteenth century American industrial society upon sixth century feudal English monarchy, and the resulting failure of Hank Morgan's reforms to improve Arthurian England, suggest Twain did not believe that American democracy had improved the essential moral bearing of human civilization in the subsequent thirteen centuries. As self professed "moralist for the masses," Twain's aim was to present his perceived failures of America's industrial capitalist democracy. While Everett Carter's application of "hard" and "soft" criticism to *A Connecticut Yankee* provides a helpful ideological outline for scholarship about the novel, the scheme is too reductionistic to account for the Twain's public and personal ambivalences.

Twain's satire of Arthurian legend unquestionably criticizes nostalgia for a Lost Land, but at the same time, Twain undercuts any idealization of democratic capitalism. On the other hand, Twain's ostensible hero, Hank Morgan, embodies America's greatest hopes for the future and appears to represent a glorification of American progress. But, in view of Hank Morgan's cataclysmic failure and the sentimental melodrama of the novel's conclusion, Twain makes a nostalgic critique of American hopes for industrial progress. *A Connecticut Yankee* is at once a defense of reality as Twain perceived it and a nostalgic reaffirmation of Victorian morality as the act of imagination by which to remake reality nearer the dream.

Chapter I

American society during the Gilded Age saw the rise of spectacularly wealthy industrialists, the expansion of industrial technology and the dominance of government by corporate wealth. At the same time, America saw an unprecedented flood of poor, immigrant populations, the increasing mechanization of daily life and an ever more corrupt government bureaucracy. These changes produced a seemingly impassable gulf between the rich and the poor, deepening class resentments, creating social unrest and acrimonious confrontations between capital and labor.

In response to the radical changes wrought by America's industrial expansion after the Civil War, America's genteel culture, comprised of writers, artists and intellectuals, saw itself increasingly alienated from American society and, consequently, adopted a reformist mentality. Comprised of the older New England literary establishment (Francis Parkman, James Russell Lowell, Ralph Waldo Emerson) and the rising generation of well known scholars and editors (Charles Eliot Norton, E. L. Godkin, Henry Adams, William Dean Howells), genteel culture turned toward politics and cultural criticism to address the crises of a sharply divided and increasingly alien America. Though accustomed to a position of national influence, genteel culture in fact no longer stood as the paragon of wealth and virtue for American society. Disgusted by the immoral speculative wealth and financial piracy of America's growing plutocracy, afraid of the exploding urban, immigrant population, and

repulsed by the "vulgar success-minded middle-class" rising to prominence, "'Frustrated aristocrats' and 'genteel reformers'" saw themselves as the final bastion of cultivated intelligence in an American culture cast from its traditional social, economic and moral foundations (Trachtenberg 153-4).

Charles Eliot Norton, a Harvard art historian, observed that "Of all the civilized nations, [America was] the most deficient in the higher culture of the mind" (Trachtenberg 155). Norton's view, based on higher education and cultural sophistication, was a common denominator in genteel culture's attempt to reform American culture. Ralph Waldo Emerson, in response to Matthew Arnold's criticism of American culture's lack of distinction, and its "practical minded values," heeded Arnold's call to American intellectuals to become "apostolates of civilization" (Trachtenberg 156). In "The Progress of Culture," an 1867 address to the Harvard Phi Beta Kappa Society, Emerson redefined genteel culture's focus. Repudiating his stance in "The American Scholar" (1837), which encouraged America to break from its European cultural roots and forge its own democratic culture based on "the common . . . the familiar, the low," Emerson had "invested his faith in 'the power of minorities,' in the 'few superior and attractive men,' and called for a 'knighthood of virtue . . . [to] 'calm and guide' a 'barbarous age'" (Trachtenberg 156). Emerson's 1867 revision of his earlier hope for American culture reflects genteel culture's call for men of trained intelligence, integrity beyond narrow financial and political interests, and loyalty to the ideal of a civilized republic. In referring to a "knighthood of

virtue," Emerson's comments imply a turn from the democratic masses to the genteel elite to lead American reform.

American intellectuals during the Gilded Age saw the sweetness and light of culture as a hopeful social and political force. As a response to the extremes of lavish wealth and abject poverty that threatened the ideal of a Jeffersonian republic, genteel reformers envisioned culture as a middle ground, as a means to narrow the growing gaps among classes. During the Gilded Age, genteel reformers maintained the idea of culture as a station of personal refinement, aesthetic sophistication, and higher education. Combining the Protestant work ethic with education, this view of culture was perceived as a democratizing influence available to anyone willing to work hard and embrace these American ideals. In this formulation, culture embodied a political message, "a vision of a harmonious body politic under rule of reason, light, and sweet, cheerful emotion" (Trachtenberg 143). Culture was to function as a common American ideal beyond the self-interest that dictated political and economic conflicts.

Between the late 1860's and 1890's, there was a proliferation of public museums and private universities dedicated to the mission of diffusing culture in American society. Principally philanthropic endeavors, these institutions appeared ostensibly as democratic enterprises, but they reinforced the association between art and wealth as well as the notion that culture was a product of the European past. The idea of culture proffered by genteel reformers was fundamentally nostalgic and anti-democratic. The inherent contradiction embodied in

cultural institutions and in the very idea of culture reveals the aristocratic attitudes of the genteel reformers. Elite notions of culture implied hierarchies of value coextensive with social hierarchy (Trachtenberg 157). Those with high social standing and wealth dispensed culture to the less wealthy, lower on the social ladder. Ironically, genteel culture essentially created the conditions for aspiration to wealth and status it found so vulgar in the emerging middle-class.

But the idea of culture as a mediating, equalizing influence was not confined to the elite classes. Advocates of labor reform, beginning with Ira Steward in the late 1860's, supported their arguments for an eight hour work day with the idea that more leisure time would enable the working classes to cultivate its tastes, and, further, its material desires. Mechanical reproduction of chromolithographs had led to broader distribution of inexpensive art (Trachtenberg 150). Indeed, culture had become a commodity available to any who desired it; even advertisements reproduced art so that the poorest workers could beautify their homes. However, for E. L. Godkin, editor of *The Nation*, the "desire to see and own pictures" was not real culture. Real culture was an exercise of discipline, self-denial and obedience to something superior, and was not merely the ownership of popular, cultural artifacts (Trachtenberg 157). Godkin, here, illustrates the inherently aristocratic attitude genteel reformers held toward their cultural inferiors and re-enforces the division of classes defined by the elite ideal of culture within American society.

The notion of culture as a refining and mediating influence in society converged with the diffusion of cultural artifacts to create an ideal vision of the middle-class home. Rooted in the American ideal of a republic of educated, independent property holders, this vision of the middle-class was a popular theme in journals of opinion and sermons of the era. In conjunction with these social forces, the idea of women as nurturing and beautifying solidified the image of the cultivated home as "a domestic island of virtue and stability" (Trachtenberg 149). The influence of women and the cultivated home served, ideally, to counteract the competitive, masculine enterprises of labor, business and politics. This image of domestic harmony, a "virtually official" image of the middle class home, however, belied the reality that wage labor afforded little opportunity for social mobility (Trachtenberg 143). The idealized notion of the middle-class, then, served to insulate social reformers and members of the evolving middle-class from the deeper problems plaguing American life, primarily the economic disparity between capital and labor, and the increasingly rigid social hierarchy.

Coming to New England from the bohemian, Western lifestyle of his earlier career as a journalist, Mark Twain aspired to social status. In his marriage to Olivia Langdon, he married into stable wealth and middle-class respectability. Through a letter of introduction from his father-in-law, Jervis Langdon, Twain met Henry Ward Beecher, one high priest of New England's genteel culture. Twain established a relationship with Beecher that advanced his social contacts and career as a lecturer, writer and self-promoter. Nevertheless, Twain was wary of Beecher who "impressed him more as a showman than as a shepherd" and

possessed "a hint of the religious mountebank and hypocrite" (Kaplan, 24). Twain settled near Beecher in the exclusive Nook Farm neighborhood outside Hartford, Connecticut, and participated in the social world of New England culture. But Twain was never at ease with his status in elite New England culture. He was an outsider, a Southerner, and by some accounts merely an irreverent funnyman, not a serious artist to the extent that he ridiculed idols sacred to genteel culture. When *Huckleberry Finn* was published in February, 1885, the novel went unreviewed for nearly three months, increasing Twain's sense of alienation.

In contrast to *The Prince and the Pauper* (1881) which had been universally accepted and praised by the American genteel literary establishment, *Huckleberry Finn* was vilified. In the May issue of *Century* magazine, Thomas Sargeant Perry, a Boston scholar and critic, praised the novel's "immortal hero" and Twain's ability to teach "by implication and not didactic preaching" (Kaplan, 268). Perry, however, spoke a minority opinion. Most critics condemned *Huckleberry Finn* for its "'blood-curdling humor', gutter realism, 'coarse and dreary fun' and total unsuitability for young people" (Kaplan 268). Finally, the Library Committee of Concord, Massachusetts launched *Huckleberry Finn* into public attention when the committee banned the novel from its bookshelves in March, 1885. Publicly, Twain applauded the ban for its potential boost to book sales, but, privately, he was hurt and confused by its rejection.

Despite his ambivalent relationship to New England society, Twain was affected by the predominant ideals of genteel culture. Prior to his marriage, Twain had long sought the gentrifying influence of women. During his voyage on the *Quaker City* in 1867, Twain met Mary Fairbanks who became his guide in morality and manners, and even edited his manuscripts for "vulgarities and vernacularisms, for lack of charity and too much irreverence" (Kaplan 45). Twain and Mary Fairbanks adopted each other as surrogate mother and son. Or, as Kaplan aptly summarizes, "Mary Fairbanks was the kind of civilizing influence that Huck Finn lit out from, but which Clemens courted for years" (Kaplan 44). During his courtship of Olivia Langdon, he implored her "to save him from becoming 'a homeless vagabond . . . to scold and correct him, to lecture him on the sin of smoking . . . [and] to send him Henry Ward Beecher's sermon pamphlets" (Kaplan 80). Twain idealized Livy's spiritual and refined qualities which he found a necessary complement to his rough Western experience. After they were married in 1870, Livy Clemens became Twain's literary censor and civilizing influence; although, the confluence of their temperaments drew Livy farther from her devout piety than it pulled Twain from his irreverent sarcasm. As Twain prepared the final drafts of *A Connecticut Yankee* for publication, Livy was ill and unable to read them, so she entrusted that task to William Dean Howells who praised the book, only encouraging Twain to diffuse his specific attack against the Roman Catholic Church.

During the 1880's prior to publication of *A Connecticut Yankee* in 1889, Twain was involved in a wide variety of business pursuits - "excesses of enterprise," according to Howells in 1885, during Twain's

involvement with the Grant memoir - which overshadowed his own writing career(Kaplan 271). In addition to establishing his own publishing house with his nephew, Charles Webster, to publish *Huck Finn* and Ulysses Grant's memoir, Twain launched various business ventures including the infamous Paige typesetter. Ranging from the relatively successful "Mark Twain's Self-Pasting Scrapbook" to Plasmon, a high-protein food concentrate, Twain was a manic speculator who aspired to the ranks of America's plutocracy (Kaplan 150, 352). Twain's investments and inventions, however, were largely unprofitable and required him to continue making loathsome lecture tours to support his lavish Hartford home and lifestyle. Due to the volatile economic climate of the Gilded Age, the financial burden of the Paige typesetter, and mounting debts, Twain declared bankruptcy in April 1894.

In an 1890 notebook entry, reflecting specifically on his mercurial experience with the Paige typesetter, Twain imagined that the history of that enterprise would have made "a large book in which a million men would see themselves as in a mirror" (Kaplan 282). The image of a book as a mirror is a helpful tool in evaluating *A Connecticut Yankee*. To the extent that Twain maintained that all his works were, in some sense, autobiographical, Twain's wish for millions of men to identify with him suggests his hope to present an exemplum. While Hank Morgan reflects Twain's entrepreneurial enthusiasm, his sixth century, democratic experiment ultimately fails and, in the end, he laments the loss of his family not the nation he built. Based on his experience in financial speculation, Twain implies that family and home are more valuable than the pursuit of wealth. Through this trope, then, the novel extends

beyond social criticism and encompasses Twain's own varied experiences and ambivalent views of the Gilded Age; it is an exploration both social and personal.

While the action of *A Connecticut Yankee* occurs in Arthurian England, Twain employs that mythic background as a mirror to reflect the prominent aspects of America's Gilded Age society. He initially conceived the novel as a "contrast" between "the English life of the whole of the Middle Ages" and "the life of modern Christendom and modern civilization -- to the advantage of the latter, of course[,] " but his claim to the advantage of modern civilization resonates as a loaded afterthought. In *The Gilded Age* (1873), Twain's collaboration with Charles Dudley Warner, cynically, and even despairingly, satirized the excesses of American capitalism and failures of political democracy highlighting American society's incompatibility with the romantic, frontier myth. Most notably, perhaps, reviewers of *The Gilded Age* were uncomfortable with the novel's shrill, overt criticism of contemporary America and its dissonance with the polite, reverent tradition of genteel literature. Despite his aspirations to genteel cultural civilization, Twain remained a heretic. In *A Connecticut Yankee*, Twain continued his attack on American social institutions in the disguise of satire at the expense of Arthurian legend, but behind the mask of genteel subject matter and the implications of America's world historical progress, Twain challenges arrogant American assumptions of superiority and progress. With his mirror held to nineteenth century America, Twain reflects American society's own mythic misunderstandings of itself and, as he looks into that mirror, sees through his own eyes,

and expresses his own ambivalent attitudes toward America in the Gilded Age.

Chapter II

A Connecticut Yankee is a far-reaching, satiric fable that reveals the discrepancy between American ideals of itself and the underlying realities those ideals mask. In its broadest sense, the novel challenges the idea of teleological, historical progress. Twain's contrast between Arthurian England's mythic golden age and nineteenth century America's supposed golden age illustrates the failure of historical progress to engender moral, human progress. *A Connecticut Yankee* explores American democracy's humanistic failures and attempts to account for, even rectify those failures. Twain conflates historical time and place and imposes a modern perspective on Arthurian England. In his fabulous mirror, characters, attitudes and periods pass in and out of the glass, trading places with their reflections.

The structure of *A Connecticut Yankee* is deceptively simple. Some manifestation of Mark Twain, the "I" in "A Word of Explanation," is touring Warwick Castle when he meets a "curious stranger," Hank Morgan. Twain's tourist is spellbound by his conversation with the stranger in Warwick Castle and recognizes that the stranger "seemed to drift away imperceptibly out of this world and time[,] suggesting permeable, if not imaginary, historical boundaries (CY 1). Enthralled by the mythic world of castles, knights in armor, and chivalry, the tourist is further enchanted by the romance of Sir Thomas Malory. On that dark and stormy night, "Steeped in a dream of olden time," he dipped "into old Sir Thomas Malory's enchanting book, and fed at its rich feast of prodigies

and adventures" (CY 2). He revels in romantic myth and believes in the noble, chivalric goodness of Arthurian England. The tourist is afflicted with what Twain defined in *Life On the Mississippi* as "Sir Walter [Scott] Disease." Following the French Revolution's historical contributions to "liberty, humanity and progress," Twain contends that Sir Walter Scott:

by his single might checks this wave of progress, and even turns it back; sets the world in love with dreams and phantoms; with decayed and swinish forms of religion; and decayed and degraded systems of government; with the sillinesses and emptinesses, sham grandeurs, sham gauds, and sham chivalries of a brainless and worthless long-vanished society. (LOM 327)

While Twain's diagnosis was his satiric attempt to explain the American South's failure to achieve the industrial and economic progress of the North, his disdain for romantic nostalgia is plain. And, although *Life On the Mississippi* was, in part, his own nostalgic elegy for the lost land of his youth, Twain does not shy from challenging his own folly. During his own period of Anglophilia, Twain looked to England as a model of stability, gentility, rule by a cultured elite, but, in response to the English political crises of the late 1880's, he became vehemently critical of Conservative English politics and culture, based on his democratic convictions.

Twain knows well the snags of historical and cultural nostalgia and projects his naive experience onto the tourist. With both the time and money to tour England, Twain's tourist is a reflection of American genteel culture. The tourist looks to an imaginary past to find Emerson's knighthood of virtue; his journey is an escapist fantasy to a lost golden age. Twain's tourist echoes contemporary culture's nostalgia for a simpler, nobler time amid the disorder of a rapidly changing American society. When Hank Morgan offers his first-hand account of Arthurian England, the tourist eagerly reads his treasure, "The Tale of the Lost Land," through the night, and, in the end, finds his dreams of olden time shattered.

Hank Morgan, the curious stranger, provides the antidote to the tourist's "Sir Walter Scott Disease." In the latter part of "A Word of Explanation," Hank Morgan describes his own history:

I am an American. I was born and reared in Hartford, in the state of Connecticut -- anyway, just over the river, in the country. So I am a Yankee of Yankees -- and practical; yes, and nearly barren of sentiment, I suppose -- or poetry, in other words. (CY 4)

Hank Morgan is a proud son of the rural American frontier. Barren of sentiment and poetry, he is a hard-headed Yankee pragmatist. A third generation Yankee bred from and trained in traditional rural trades, Hank Morgan is also an expatriate frontiersman; he learned his "real trade" at the Colt arms factory. Reflective of nineteenth century

America's shift from a primarily rural, agricultural economy to an urban, mechanized economy, Hank is a convert to the growing nineteenth century rational, technological faith. While the fruits of his labors - weapons and engines -- are now more sophisticated than horseshoes and healthy farm animals, he maintains his native idiom and perspective: "Why, I could make anything a body wanted . . . if there wasn't any quick, new-fangled way to make a thing, I could invent one -- and do it as easy as rolling off a log" (CY 4). With one foot rooted in the passing rural life and the other atop the dawning machine age, Hank Morgan has adapted his native attributes to industrial America. Full of boastful enthusiasm and technical invention, Hank Morgan embodies the values of America's swaggering industrial culture and provides a foil to the tourist's nostalgia. Hank Morgan serves to undermine romantic illusions about Arthurian England and to criticize genteel culture's inherently nostalgic exercise of improving nineteenth century society with the "sham chivalries of a brainless and worthless long-vanished society."

Hank Morgan is the ideal vision of a self-made man. Akin to Horatio Alger's heroes, widely celebrated in the 1880's and 1890's popular culture, Hank Morgan ascended from his simple, rural origins to superintendent of a thousand men in a machine shop. At the Colt Arms factory, he "learned all there was to it," affirming traditional Protestant work ethics and the very promise of success in democratic society (CY 4). Indeed, Hank Morgan represents the fruition of (democratic and industrial) historical progress and is a harbinger of America's future. A self-educated, independent home-owner, he reflects

the industrial age's ideal of middle-class Jeffersonian democracy. In contrast to his anti-intellectual, back-country forefathers, he possesses broad, if not scattered, understandings of history, literature and astronomy, and he has informed political convictions and a shrewd business mind; moreover, he has an aesthetic sensibility, even without his suspecting it, "a passion for art had got worked into the fabric of [his] being" (CY 52-3). Hank Morgan is the fully acculturated product of America's Gilded Age embodying the ideals of the entire range of American society. In Hank Morgan, Twain presents genteel culture's idealized vision of the American middle-class and the mass aspirations of American working classes. Like Hank Morgan, Twain was a vigorous proponent of rational, scientific progress and maintained tremendous hope for American democracy. Unlike Hank Morgan, though, Twain recognized that democracy, at least thus far, had failed to meet its noble ideals. An easily identifiable character for his contemporary reading public, Hank Morgan represented what Howells defined as Twain's "final court of appeal," "the average practical American public" (Smith, *Writer* 107). Hank Morgan embodies America's proudest attributes and most hopeful ideals, and reflects its heritage and changing world. Twain shows American society what it thinks it is and what it hopes to be.

At the pinnacle of his success, Hank Morgan is violently cast back in time to Arthurian England. As the result of a labor dispute, a "misunderstanding conducted with crowbars", Hank Morgan suffers a world-darkening crusher to the head. Twain casts Hank Morgan back in time to an edenic, pre-industrial world to show the evolution of the American

self-made man. Hank Morgan's American attributes survive the shock of his trans-century displacement. Upon learning he has awakened in the sixth century, Hank pulls himself up by his own bootstraps and rises to the challenge. "Not a man to waste time after [his] mind's made up and there's work on hand," he resolves to boss the country inside of three years (CY 17).

In his initial experiences and observations in medieval England, Hank Morgan tarnishes the romantic sheen of an edenic Camelot, and, simultaneously, bridges the gap between sixth century England and nineteenth century America. Accosted by a knight in full medieval costume, Hank Morgan recognizes the figure as "fresh out of a picture book." Proudly barren of sentiment and poetry, Hank's aesthetic appreciation is for the picturesque from a glorified, romantic past. Unable to understand the other fellow's language and incredulous at the spectacle, Hank Morgan threatens the bizarre character, "What are you giving me? . . . Get along back to your circus, or I'll report you" (CY 5). Even upon seeing Camelot, also "out of a picture," Hank thinks it is Bridgeport, Connecticut, referring to the home of P. T. Barnum's circus. He thinks the events a joke and Camelot an asylum implying the irrationality and unbelievability of the world he finds. Unknowingly transported through time, Hank assumes he is in Connecticut, as if such a spectacle were possible in nineteenth century America. The margins of his dream are unclear and blend ancient figures with contemporary pictures.

Hank Morgan's aesthetic sensibility, however, does not blind him to the world he sees. Taken prisoner by the accosting knight, Sir Kay, Hank moves along "as one in a dream" and reports "signs of life" as they began to appear. Hank passes a "wretched cabin," fields and garden patches in an "indifferent state of cultivation;" "brawny men, with long, coarse, uncombed hair that hung down over their faces and made them look like animals;" women wearing iron collars, and naked children; "substantial windowless houses of stone, scattered among a wilderness of thatched cabins;" and streets that were "mere crooked alleys, and unpaved" (CY 11). Underlying Camelot of the sentimental imagination, Hank Morgan observes a disorderly, primitive town, signs that serve to undermine nostalgic ideals.

Within the walls of Arthur's court, Hank Morgan undermines mythic notions of chivalry and gentility. Hank introduces Arthur's Court and its manners: "Well, it was a curious kind of spectacle, and interesting. It was an immense place, and rather naked -- yes, and full of loud contrasts" (CY 19). Hank Morgan describes a romantic medieval spectacle, though underlying the lofty and colorful palace are dilapidated floors, primitive and childlike artworks and men who wear hats indoors. The loudest of all the contrasts in the great hall is the action opposing the setting. Hank Morgan reports:

Mainly they were drinking -- from entire ox horns; but a few were still munching bread or gnawing beef bones. There was about an average of two dogs to one man; and these sat in

expectant attitudes till a spent bone was flung to them. . .

(CY 19)

Hank Morgan's matter-of-fact description turns to low burlesque. He shows the dignified, courtly setting of Arthur's round table to be a drunken revelry in which the noble knights of England not only eat with dogs but throw food to them and bet on the ensuing fights. In stark contrast to Victorian attitudes, even the women enjoy and participate in indecorous or uncourtly behavior. While the superintendent of an American machine shop might find this revelry funny or even enjoyable, Hank's description resounds with condescension toward the crude behavior of the court. Hank's experience is inconsistent with his nineteenth century pictures of chivalry. Twain shows that a mechanic, a prisoner even, finds Arthurian society repugnant, thus implying that nineteenth century, genteel culture's romance of the Middle Ages is ridiculous.

According to Hank Morgan, not only are the lords and ladies of Arthur's Court crude and barbaric, but they are brainless. Despite "something attractive and lovable" about them, Hank Morgan observes:

There did not seem to be brains enough in that entire nursery, so to speak, to bait a fish-hook with; but you didn't seem to mind that, after a little, because you soon saw that brains were not needed in a society like that, and indeed would have marred it, hindered it, spoiled its symmetry -- perhaps rendered its existence impossible.

(CY 23)

Based on his unwavering faith in reason, Hank Morgan self-importantly views the citizens of Arthurian England as unreasonable and childlike. To the extent that he views progress as a product of rationality, Hank Morgan sees medieval England as uncivilized, and surmises that any degree of intelligence might destroy it. In part, Hank foreshadows his attempt to put Arthurian England on a rational, business basis and his destruction of his own utopian enterprise with his blind faith in rationality. But through Hank Morgan, Twain directs a broadside critique at genteel culture's nostalgic model for reform. Twain implies that any rational appraisal of Arthur's Court would cure Sir Walter Scott disease.

Seated among frightfully maimed, hacked and carved prisoners in his initial experience at court, Hank finds that Arthur's Court was gracious, childlike and innocent, but also "dealt in tales of blood and suffering with a guileless relish that made me almost forget to shudder" (CY 20). Unable to reconcile the apparent innocence of the people and their tales of blood and violence full of indelicate terms that would have made a "Comanche blush," Hank Morgan draws upon his knowledge of literature to explain the discrepancy. Having read *Tom Jones* and *Roderick Ransom*, Hank knows that the "first ladies and gentlemen in England had remained little or no cleaner in their talk, and in the morals and conduct which such talk implies, clear up to a hundred years ago" and that, if Sir Walter Scott had allowed his characters to speak for themselves, they would have "embarrass[ed] a tramp in our day" (CY 33-4). Hank Morgan believes that *Tom Jones* and *Roderick Ransom* present

more real depictions of English society and manners than Walter Scott's romances. Though he displays a degree of cultural sophistication, Hank's readings of Fielding, Smollett and Scott are literal and mechanical. Based on his own historical observations, Hank Morgan accepts historical fiction as fact in the cases of *Tom Jones* and *Roderick Ransom*, but he dismisses Scott's historical fictions as unreal.

Through Hank's understandings of Fielding and Scott, however, Twain implies his own ideology of historical fiction. Twain loathed Sir Walter Scott and went so far as to blame the American Civil War on him, despite Scott's death in 1832. In particular, Twain objected to Scott's romantic glorification of the English past and its social institutions. To the extent that modern history, for Scott, threatened traditional English social ideals, Scott's novels attempted to revitalize ideals of heroism in a skeptical age. Scott's work embodied a notion of history that the social past carries the social practices of the future and that historical progress was the result of a dialectical synthesis between different social orders. Twain, however, saw history more as a linear progression with Gilded Age America representing mankind's greatest achievements thus far. But, in his increasing disgust with the Gilded Age, Twain recognized that reverence for the past was part of the present's problem and that not only had the human race failed to show moral progress but that reverence for the past prevented heroism in the modern world. So, then, beneath Hank Morgan's endorsement of *Tom Jones* as a more real novel than *Ivanhoe*, Twain reveals a preference for Fielding's historical ideology.

Both Fielding and Smollett wrote according to the Enlightenment assumption that literature presented an understanding of human nature as flawed and constant in relation to broader historical changes. In contrast to Scott and nineteenth century genteel culture, who wished to revivify and reform their ages with ideals from the past, Twain found such nostalgia not only misguided but impotent in the face of technological progress and industrial capitalism. Hank Morgan's reference to the different ideas underlying historical romances reveals Twain's ambivalence concerning hopes for the moral progress of civilization. Twain wants to believe in the progress of human society but the evidence he finds in nineteenth century American society contradicts his hopes that the progress of civilization was evident in American industrial society. Twain finds little evidence for his hope that human civilization has shown any progress at all.

In his continued observations at Arthur's court, Hank Morgan testifies to the notion that flawed human nature has remained constant in history. During Sir Kay's presentation to Queen Guenever that glorified the heroism of Sir Launcelot, Hank Morgan is touched watching "the queen blush and smile, and look embarrassed and happy, and fling furtive glances at Sir Launcelot that would have got him shot, in Arkansas, to a dead certainty" (CY 24). The novel follows the undercurrent of this implied dalliance between Guenever and Launcelot until it precipitates the civil war leading to the church interdict and the fall of Hank's republic. Hank's observation challenges ideals of loyalty and a "knighthood of virtue" and, further, suggests that human lust and betrayal were part of the idealized past.

This allusion to marital infidelity reflects nineteenth century genteel culture and "the Beecher horror" (Kaplan 158). In 1872, Henry Ward Beecher was publicly accused of adultery. Though Beecher's accusers were jailed for publishing obscene matter and Beecher's adultery trial ended in a hung jury in 1875, the charges circulated unresolved among elite social circles for years following. Twain publicly defended Beecher, but he also saw the affair as evidence of national moral decay. Twain employed the scandal to further undermine the notion of a chivalric golden age in either medieval England or nineteenth century America.

Twain further observed ethical misconduct by Henry Ward Beecher in social and economic matters. In this case, Twain directs his criticism toward both Hank Morgan, distancing himself from his protagonist, and Henry Ward Beecher, revealing nineteenth century genteel culture's mixed motives in their campaign for social reform. Hank Morgan and Henry Ward Beecher share captivating oratorical abilities in the propagation of their faiths and shamelessly employ their social status for profit. In correlating the two, as we will see, Twain casts doubt on the altruism of their respective ministries. Hank Morgan is not Henry Ward Beecher, but Twain invests Morgan with some of Beecher's questionable dealings to highlight his argument against false gentility and for self-interest in both sixth century England and nineteenth century America.

During the 1880's, Henry Ward Beecher had accepted a one thousand dollar fee for advertising women's trusses and fifteen thousand dollars'

worth of stock for writing favorable editorials about the Northern Pacific railroad in the *Christian Union* (Kaplan 157). In conjunction with Beecher sermon titles like "The Ministry of Wealth," the irony of Beecher's involvement with industry was not lost on Twain (Kaplan 85).

When Hank Morgan opens a shirt factory in Arthurian England, he markets his clothes as "a perfect protection against sin." Hank advertises for his tow linen shirts on walls and rocks all over England, visible from a mile away: "*Buy the Only Genuine St. Stylite; patronized by all the Nobility. Patent applied for*" (CY 214). Like Beecher, Hank Morgan exploits the faith of the Arthurian citizens for his own profit and lends material credibility to religious faith by making it a valuable, high status commodity. In effect, he reaffirms the status quo of Arthurian society. In his presentation of Hank Morgan as a greedy self-promoter, Twain's irony extends to Henry Ward Beecher.

Striking even closer to his target, Twain stakes Hank Morgan in a soap manufacturer. Hank introduces "Persimmons Soap -- All The Primme-Donne Use It" for the purpose of "civilizing and uplifting" the nation (CY 139). Compare to Henry Ward Beecher's 1888 testimonial for Pear's Soap in which Beecher writes:

If cleanliness is next to Godliness, soap must be considered as a means of Grace, and a clergyman who recommends moral things should be willing to recommend soap. I am told that my commendation of Pear's soap has opened for it a large sale in the United States. I am willing to stand by every

word for it that I ever uttered. A man must be fastidious indeed who is not satisfied with it. (Trachtenberg 137)

Twain implicates Hank Morgan in the same profiteering he detests in Henry Ward Beecher. By way of Hank Morgan's sixth century shirt factory, Twain exposes American industry's commodification of piety and the appropriation of the genteel reformer's cultural standing for mutual profit at the expense of the consumers, faith and income. Twain's insight further implies that genteel culture and its staunch support of Republican business interests combined to maintain its power by exploiting its own campaign for virtue among the unwashed masses.

Observing the discrepancy between the language and the conduct of Arthur's Court, Hank Morgan asserts that "to the unconsciously indelicate, all things are delicate. King Arthur's people were not aware that they were indecent, and I had presence of mind enough not to mention it" (CY 34). Certainly aware that his life hangs in the balance, Hank refrains from pointing out the hypocrisy of his captors. Twain, however, does not refrain from criticizing the hypocrisy of Arthur's people in his day. In the same way he reveals the underside of chivalric England, Twain exposes similar ironies in nineteenth century America. Through Hank Morgan, Twain suggests that the moralistic delicacy and high-minded ideals of genteel culture may mask a deeper indelicacy.

Particularly enraged by Gilded Age America's rigid social hierarchy, Twain recognized genteel culture's self-interested attempt to

preserve its own social stature by imposing its own standards of cultural sophistication and morality on the American public in the guise of reform. Rather than target the uncultivated masses as the cause of Gilded Age social turmoil, Twain considered himself moralist for the masses and directed his attacks toward the powers that served to oppress the masses, "The few: the king, the capitalist, and a handful of other overseers and superintendents" (New Dynasty 285). In equating the king with the capitalist, Twain highlights the kinship between monarchy and democratic capitalism suggesting American society's similar social structure and American democracy's failure to progress beyond archaic social forms. For Twain, social reform derived from political and economic reform rather than mythic, cultural ideals passed down from a "brainless and worthless long-vanished society."

Mark Twain used Hank Morgan to satirize sixth century chivalric culture and the pretensions of American genteel culture. But, while he invested Hank Morgan with popular ideals of American democratic success and technological promise, Twain also used Hank Morgan as the object of his critique of nineteenth century rationalism and industrial culture. In a 1888 letter to Dan Beard, the illustrator of *A Connecticut Yankee*, Twain says of Hank Morgan that, without the benefit or the hindrance of a college education: "This Yankee of mine . . . is a perfect ignoramus; he is boss of a machine shop, he can build a locomotive or a Colt's revolver, he can put up and run a telegraph line, but he's an ignoramus nevertheless" (Ensor 309). In his presentation of Hank Morgan, Twain reveals his deeper ambivalence toward America's democratic ideals and industrial progress. While Twain credits Hank Morgan for his

technological prowess, he implies that mechanical ingenuity alone does not make him anything more than a good mechanic. In respect to America's most cherished beliefs about itself, Twain's rendering of Hank Morgan is a heroization of the average American self-made man. But while he believed that the average man was the source of America's excellence, Twain also believed that he could be "an ignoramus nevertheless."

Chapter II

Twain turns his disgust with American society on his American hero, Hank Morgan. Hank Morgan is a synecdoche for the attributes Twain found most promising and most damaging to American society; he stands for America's most cherished democratic principles and native attributes, yet he also represents the chicanery and hypocrisy of the political Boss, the self-interested and ruthless practices of the American Businessman and the naivete and potential danger of unalloyed faith in rationality and the ideology of Progress. Ultimately, Hank Morgan is a hypocrite and the object of Twain's scorn for the lack of moral progress in relation to modern American society.

In Hank Morgan's proud stance, "barren of sentiment and poetry," Twain suggests Hank Morgan's tragic flaw. Even while Twain criticized nineteenth century genteel reformers for professing cultural sophistication as a ground for social unity (a standard he believed America's elite class failed to uphold), he based his fundamental criticism of Hank Morgan on the same aesthetic and ethical grounds that American genteel culture held against American society.

Upon inspecting his living quarters in Arthur's castle, Hank is homesick for the "unpretending" decor of his Hartford home and misses the ubiquitous "insurance-chromos" and the nine, three-color "God-Bless-Our-Home" pieces that grace his parlor. Grown accustomed to "chromos," Hank "saw now that a passion for art had got worked into the fabric of

[his] being, and was become a part of [him]" (CY 53). However, he finds nothing in his sixth century state room that appeals to his taste:

nothing in it was the right color or the right shape; and as for proportions, even Raphael couldn't have botched them more formidably after all his practice on those nightmares they call his 'celebrated Hampton Court Cartoons'. Raphael was a bird. We had several of his chromos; one was his 'Miraculous Draught of Fishes,' where he puts in a miracle of his own -- puts three men into a canoe which wouldn't have held a dog without upsetting. I always admired to study R.'s art, it was so fresh and unconventional. (CY 54)

As a mark of cultural sophistication and social distinction, Hank Morgan fancies himself an art critic. Although his critique of Raphael shows his practical, workingman's appreciation of art, his insight into Raphael is literal and mechanical, like his commentary on literature. Despite the passion for art worked into the fabric of his being, the sweetness and light of higher aesthetic sensibility is lost on him. Hank Morgan is a cultural heathen. He pretends to cultural sophistication, but he longs for "insurance-chromos" and his nine "God Bless Our Home" pieces, confirming his popular, middle-class tastes.

In his essay, "Chromo-Civilization," attacking the empty arrogance of mass culture, E. L. Godkin vehemently chastised that "'large body of slenderly equipped persons' who mistake a 'smattering' of knowledge and a 'desire to see and own pictures' for real culture" (Trachtenberg 157).

It is worth quoting Godkin's commentary at length in order to appreciate both the tenor of genteel culture's criticism and the remarkable accuracy with which his comments describe Hank Morgan's character in *A Connecticut Yankee*. Referring to the newly wealthy, middle-class influenced by popular culture, Godkin condemns those who are "engaged in enjoying themselves after their fashion" and

who firmly believe that they have reached, in the matter of social, mental, and moral culture, all that is attainable or desirable by anybody, and, who, therefore, tackle all the problems of the day -- men's, women's, and children's rights and duties, marriage, education, suffrage, life, death and immortality The result is a kind of mental and moral chaos, in which many of the fundamental rules of living, which have been worked out painfully by thousands of years of bitter human experience, seem in imminent risk of disappearing totally. (Tracht, 157)

In his scathing comments, Godkin reaffirms genteel culture's notions of social distinction based on degrees of cultural sophistication. For Godkin, consumption of culture was not a substitute for understanding culture. He implies that the middle-class culture of the era was unqualified to judge or resolve the social, moral, and intellectual issues of the day. As if in response to Emerson's call for a "knighthood of virtue," authors and editors of respected journals echoed Godkin's comments implying a notion of culture "embodying a hierarchy of values corresponding to a social hierarchy of stations or

classes" (Trachtenberg 157). Considering Howells' assessment of Twain as a "practical aristocrat," Twain certainly shared Godkin's sentiments.

On the one hand, Twain wanted to believe that Hank Morgan's technological acumen, rational mind and fervent democratic beliefs were the essential foundations for a progressive and just American society. On the other hand, Twain questioned Hank Morgan's wisdom; he feared that Hank Morgan's simplistic, rational perspective eclipsed the sweetness and light of higher culture. Twain's divided attitudes toward Hank Morgan reflect his conflicting attitudes concerning his own place in American society. At the same time that he aspired to wealth and social status, dined with European royalty and lived in Nook Farm among the arbiters of genteel literature and morality, he flouted the conventions of his own public aspirations. Both *The Prince and the Pauper* and *Joan of Arc* won unqualified acceptance from the genteel literary establishment who hailed those novels as Twain's return to the fold, but somehow despite himself, Twain remained loyal to his frontier roots. In *Roughing It*, *The Gilded Age* and *A Connecticut Yankee*, Twain used low burlesques, tall tales and indignant populist attitudes to satirize and condemn the excesses of the monied society to which he aspired.

Twain recognizes that Hank Morgan, with several Raphael chromos and nine "God-Bless-Our-Home" pieces, is a product of mass produced sophistication. In his description of the Grangerford family's parlor in *Huck Finn*, Twain draws a stark contrast between the affected gentility of the Grangerford home and the underlying barbarity of their continuing feud with the Sheperdsons. Barren of appreciation for sixth

and fifteenth century art, Hank's aesthetic sensibility is confined to mass produced, nineteenth century reproductions of art. Hank Morgan can buy culture, but he does not have culture. Embodied in this "loud contrast," Hank Morgan is capable of incivility sufficient to make a "Comanche blush" despite his genteel pretensions. With a tilt of his mirror, Twain sees this aspect of Hank Morgan and sneers.

In part, Twain shares Godkin's fear of Hank Morgan's shallow cultural and aesthetic sensibility, implying that mechanical rationality does not necessarily foster moral understanding and progress. Twain also shares Hank Morgan's perspective, however, in ridiculing genteel culture's nostalgic reverence for "brainless and worthless long-vanished societies." On the one hand, reverence for ancient culture is ridiculous in the light of nineteenth century rationality, but, on the other hand, rationality itself prevents appreciation for the sweetness and light of culture.

Twain considered elite culture's "cult of ideality" irrational and anti-democratic to the extent that it re-enforced social hierarchies no different than those of Arthurian monarchy (Smith, 107). Yet, at the same time, he appreciated expressions of nobility in human nature within the constraints of social hierarchy. As a result, Twain was ambivalent toward genteel culture's program of social reform based on its normative, hierarchical view of culture. An auto-didact himself, Twain did not accept genteel culture's tenet that higher education breeds essential moral and aesthetic sensibilities, and invested Hank Morgan with a deist's naturally sound heart.

Twain provides evidence of Hank Morgan's grasp of moral, and humanistic understanding in Hank's own description of himself. In his confrontation with Queen Morgan LeFay after he frees unjustly held prisoners from her dungeons, Hank Morgan attempts to explain the Queen's inability to understand his notions of justice. According to Hank Morgan:

Training -- training is everything; training is all there is to a person; there is no such thing as nature; what we call by that misleading name is merely heredity and training. . . . All that is original in us, and therefore fairly creditable or discreditable to us can be covered up and hidden by the point of a cambric needle And as for me, all that I think about in this plodding sad pilgrimage, this pathetic drift between the eternities, is to look out and humbly live a pure and high and blameless life, and save that one microscopic atom in me that is truly *me*

(CY, 162)

Although he recognizes the microscopic atom of human nature in his own being, Hank Morgan scientifically quantifies it and speaks for its relative insignificance in relation to his training. Twain, drawing obliquely on scientific materialists like Darwin and Spencer, and the moral utilitarianism he found in W.E.H. Lecky, invests Hank Morgan with modern and crude understandings of human nature consistent with his evaluations of literature and art. To Hank's credit, however, he also

recognizes the microscopic element of human nature in himself; moreover, he values it more than his training. In Hank Morgan's description of his being, Twain reveals his ambivalence regarding the possibility of divine creation and the ideology of progress. While he wants to believe in the perfectibility of mankind, Twain also doubts that possibility due to the practical insignificance of human nature in relation to the overwhelming advances of industrial civilization.

Hank Morgan's microscopic atom of original nature reflects Twain's underlying, yet waning perhaps, deistic belief. Ironically, Twain's deism is as romantic as Sir Walter Scott's novels and American genteel culture's campaign for social reform. Again, Twain maintains opposed attitudes. Within Hank Morgan's evaluation of his nature, Twain further expresses his ambivalence toward the future of American society. In *A Connecticut Yankee*, Twain tested his faith in the ostensibly rational and realistic progress of industrial civilization against his ultimately romantic faith in humans as inherently good, just and reasonable animals. Twain sought evidence for the moral progress of mankind in both industrial civilization and human nature. To the extent that neither proved a consistent force for moral progress in Twain's mind, *A Connecticut Yankee* maintains coextensively opposed beliefs.

In his effort to transform Arthurian England into a modern, industrial republic, Hank Morgan founds his "new deal" on the utopian forecasts of Jeffersonian democracy. However, rather than an arcadian, agricultural civilization, Hank Morgan implicitly proposes an industrial utopia. Reflecting Twain's conviction that "That government is not best

which best secures mere life and property -- there is a more valuable thing -- manhood," Hank Morgan discovers "manhood" in his individual encounters with English citizens (Budd 137). For "a man with the dream of a republic in his head," he is encouraged by his observation that:

A man *is* a man, at bottom. Whole ages of abuse and oppression cannot crush the manhood clear out of him. . . . Yes there is plenty good enough material for a republic in the most degraded people that ever existed. . . . We should see certain things yet, let us hope and believe. . . . Yes, there was no occasion to give up my dream yet a while.
(CY 297, 300).

Hank Morgan's future republic exists as a dream in his head. Looking to a time prior to the supremacy of the church, he founds his ideal state of man on an abstract, prelapsarian model. He assumes that there was a better state of man in the past that whole ages of abuse have hidden, and that industrial progress, founded in principles of reason, can resurrect the men who were once men and "held their heads up with spirit, pride and independence". Despite his hard-headed empiricism, Hank Morgan maintains faith in abstract and inherently nostalgic democracy, rooted in his belief that he does maintain an original atom of human goodness and reason. But Hank Morgan's industrial developments mechanize and diminish the qualities of manhood he hopes to resurrect.

In his system of man-factories and civilization nurseries, Hank intends to "turn groping and grubbing automata into men" (CY 157). Here, Hank's indignant flight of rhetoric underscores Twain's fear of mechanization embedded in the pun "man-factory" and the idea that men can somehow be manufactured. When Hank Morgan and Sandy encounter a group of freemen on their way to the Valley of Holiness, Hank enlists a peasant farmer for a man-factory. He borrowed "a little ink from his veins; and with this and a sliver [he] wrote on a piece of bark -- 'Put him in the Man-Factory'" (CY 114). The freeman pays admission to the factory with his blood, literally his own humanity, and vows to be Hank's slave in order to learn to read and write. Despite Hank's protestation that the man will not be his slave, the freeman becomes Hank's slave not in name but in fact according to Hank Morgan's own definition. While his attitude appears benevolent, his hearty arrogance and impatience with the freeman is more consistent with that of a slave holder than a social reformer. The freeman sacrifices his property and livelihood to be trained in a new faith, and he is unknowingly enslaved to Hank Morgan's ideal of industrial progress. Humanity matters less to Hank Morgan than the political and economic machinery he tries to build. In the same way he reduces blood to the function of ink, he reduces a man to a cog.

In one of the few examples of his industry in practice, The Boss further reveals his rational blindness to manhood and his underlying profit motive. In a hilarious parody of religious zealotry, The Boss carries his capitalistic zeal to its rational extreme. Upon seeing the hermit who has bowed incessantly for twenty years, The Boss immediately

quantifies the hermit's religious exercise, "It was his way of praying. I timed him with a stopwatch, and he made 1244 revolutions in 24 minutes and 46 seconds. It seemed a pity to have all that power going to waste" (CY 213-4). The Boss applies a system of elastic cords to the hermit and starts a shirt-making factory. In five years, The Boss sold eighteen thousand shirts at "the price of fifty head of cattle or a blooded race-horse in Arthurdome." The shirts cost him nothing except for the material while the pilgrim worked twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Finally, The Boss sells his interest when he learns of the hermit's injury and dumps the business on his investors.

This comic example of feudal industrialism, Hank Morgan-style, reveals the exploitative nature of industrial capitalism and nineteenth century wage labor, which labor advocates considered virtual slavery. The hermit's sweatshop hours underscore The Boss's blindness to his own definition of manhood. But the Boss's action is entirely consistent with his goal of putting Arthurian England on a business basis. There is no trace of irony in his presentation of the events. In fact, he is quite proud of his accomplishment. This is pure utilitarian capitalism based on Hank Morgan's idea of enlightened self-interest. The Boss's training and faith in industrial economy confines his utopian vision to material production and profit. He reduces human endeavor to a commodity, and he exploits the religious faith of both labor and consumers. The Boss's shirt industry is thinly disguised slavery to the extent that he neither pays the hermit nor gives him any choice concerning his employment. He exploits the power of the hermit's faith for production, and the desire for status of his consumers whom he

shamelessly overcharges. And, like any dishonest captain of modern industry, he takes several investors "into camp" and dumps the soon-to-fail business on his uninformed buyers for a quick profit.

Although he had freed the prisoners at Morgan Le Fay's castle, Hank Morgan loses touch with his ethical foundation when he recreates American government and industry. While his rhetoric is that of a populist and a labor reformer, Hank Morgan's actions are more consistent with those of a robber-baron industrialist. Like Gilded age industrialists who courted public admiration and ostentatiously flaunted wealth, Hank Morgan aspires to wealth and public attention. Twain transforms him from a modest middle class success as a machine shop supervisor to a ruthless business speculator. Observing the discrepancy between American ideals in theory and American practice in fact, Twain highlights the evolution of America's self-made man; although, for Twain, Hank Morgan's metamorphosis is reason for scorn rather than celebration; Horatio Alger has snapped his bootstraps.

Hank Morgan attempts to win the faith of his Arthurian constituency with awe inspiring technological effects that certainly resemble forms of political terrorism, and he appeals to the self-interest of some with his well meaning efforts to educate them in his "civilization nurseries" and "man-factories." Hank's projects stand secretly outside the royal government's control and echo the "boodle" projects favored by political bosses for securing votes from out-of-work laborers and newly arrived immigrants. But like his nineteenth century counterparts, he is motivated by personal profit.

On the occasion of the king's touch for evil during which diseased and disabled peasants line up for the king's touch and the gift of a gold coin worth a third of a dollar, Hank Morgan resolves to reduce the expense on the royal treasury and exploits the "chance it afforded for skinning the surplus" (CY 253). Substituting nickels for the gold coins, Hank reduces the government's expense from \$240 to \$35, adding to his one percent profit on the increase of government revenues. Proud of his financial management, he justifies the deflation by acknowledging that it is simply a gift and that "you can water a gift as much as you want to; and I generally do" (CY 253). Hank's paltry savings out of England's \$90,000 a year operating expenses effectively and senselessly harms the already down-trodden and exploited population his over-arching republican reforms are intended to aid. In this episode, Twain reveals Hank Morgan's hypocrisy, but also his own objections to the function of political bosses in American society, and the attempt to apply business methods to the operation of government.

In his vaguely defined role as "The Boss," Hank Morgan epitomizes the over-reaching, nineteenth century American middle class that E. L. Godkin so vehemently condemned. A member of America's vulgar, success-minded middle class, Hank Morgan unites the images of the political machine boss, the ruthless American capitalist, and the advocate for the masses threatening traditional American civilization. According to Alan Trachtenberg, the political boss:

represented the visible integration of politics and economics, the incorporation of mass politics into corporate society. Visible more as a type than as an actual person, he functioned to keep the transaction between public officials and private interests behind closed doors . . .

(Trachtenberg 173)

Twain recognized and loathed this evolution of the political boss. During the 1872 re-election campaign of U. S. Grant, Thomas Nast, a popular political cartoonist and illustrator for some of Twain's books, vilified Boss Tweed in a caricature representing the Democratic Party's threat to American culture. Twain resoundingly praised Nast's contribution to Grant's re-election: "you more than any other man have won a prodigious victory for Grant -- I mean, rather, for Civilization and Progress" (Trachtenberg 162). The political boss represented the professionalization of politics and its alliance with business interests which served to remove political power from voters. With increasingly galvanized political parties, party bosses appealed to voters in terms of self-interest and controlled their allegiances by bribery and terrorism. In renaming Hank Morgan "The Boss," following his miraculous eclipse, Twain divorced himself from identification with Hank Morgan. Although The Boss then continues to recite some of Twain's political convictions, The Boss remains a characterization of America's failures to advance its democratic ideals politically and economically.

Beneath the metaphorical layers depicting The Boss as a corrupt, self-interested Gilded age tycoon and politician, Hank Morgan is the

human embodiment of secular rationalism. To the extent that nineteenth century America had accepted the ideal of technological progress as a matter of faith by the time of the Civil War, Hank Morgan adopts that faith and presses it to its rational extreme.

Hank Morgan imposes a fundamentally secular New Deal on Arthurian England in the belief that he is endowed with absolute truth entrusted to him by a just and reasonable God. With unquestioned moral authority, Hank Morgan believes that his government and his selected experts are capable of repairing the moral and economic injustices perpetuated by tyrannical and corrupt, monarchical and ecclesiastical institutions through legal and economic reforms. But despite his best intentions, his reforms fail to achieve their promised freedoms and glorious ideals, and, moreover, Hank Morgan's booming nineteenth century economic machine only imitates feudal aristocracy, by continuing privilege and oppression.

In response to the growth of industrial society, the dominance of political life by business interests and the increasing disparity of wealth among classes, Twain introduced Hank Morgan and his nineteenth century to sixth century England. He then correlated the Gilded Age with the archaic social structures of medieval monarchy, and implied the failure of American society to right perpetual wrongs. Twain undermines Hank Morgan's pretense that industrial capitalism is an improvement over feudal aristocracy.

At the heart of his secular faith, Hank Morgan hopes to gradually erode the influence of the church, its fear of God and promise of heaven, and replace it with faith in reason, a kinship based on "manhood" and a belief in common good. In Hank's abstract, progressive vision, social hierarchies once based on fear and oppression would recede in favor of a universal community based on human reason, sympathy and instinct.

In Hank's description of himself as the master enchanter of the age, Twain suggests that Hank's faith in progress is illusory in relation to the conditions it creates. Hank Morgan assumes that technological progress engenders a corresponding ethical progress. Hank Morgan's faith in the ideology of progress is no more progress than the reign of superstition upholding the sixth century social hierarchy. In effect, Twain criticizes Hank Morgan and Gilded Age America on the same grounds: Twain warns against blind faith. Like twentieth century social experiments in Stalinism and Maoism, Hank Morgan resorts to tyranny and coercion when he is challenged by the established church, culminating in the Battle of the Sand Belt.

When Hank Morgan travels to France to attend to his daughter, Hello-Central's health, he is stranded there by a conspiracy covertly orchestrated by the church. Precipitated by Sir Launcelot's financial buccaneering in railroad stocks and his dalliance with Queen Guenever, civil war breaks out in England. The Boss's democratic capitalism and the underside of medieval romance combine to undermine The Boss's dream of a republic. With Arthur dead and The Boss in exile, the Church

commands England. This turn in plot confirms Hank Morgan's fear of the absolute power of the church and contradicts the United States' foundational belief in the separation between church and state. Moreover, the action encapsules the drama of human nature in any era; it is a play of greed, lust and revenge, all endemic to human history, confirming Twain's observation that material, scientific progress had failed to advance moral progress and that history provides evidence that human failures have remained constant in relation to material progress. The events that lead to war suggest inherently flawed human nature as the antagonist to ideal human relations despite the supposed power of rationalism.

The wholesale rejection of Hank's republican reforms suggests Twain's belief that superstition combined with mass opinion undermines rational, enlightened government, but it further suggests that the mass of the nation, even the backward, uncivilized Arthurian England, chooses even oppressive, traditional institutions over reductive, dehumanizing industrial technology. Hank Morgan realizes that his dream of a Republic is "to be a dream, and so remain," but presses forward with war to eradicate the irrationality that threatens his ideals of civilization (CY 415).

In rallying his faithful, remaining battalion, Hank Morgan describes his revolution as one of the oppressed against the privileged. When his fifty two, faithful boys realize all England is marching against them, they implore:

We have tried to forget what we are -- English boys! We have tried to put reason before sentiment, duty before love: our minds approve but our hearts reproach us. . . . these are our people, they are bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh, we love them -- do not ask us to destroy our nation" (CY 429),

Hank Morgan defines the war as a class struggle, "tranquilizing" them with the notion that only the knights and gentry will fight and be killed. Written when he was fifty-two years old, the book encapsulates all of Twain's hopeful, optimistic youth in defense against his mature fascinations with wealth, power and ambition, and his fears for the continued development of American civilization. Wavering in his commitment to nineteenth century ideals of rational progress, Twain does not share The Boss's cunning monomania. Twain's democratic and humanitarian social sensibilities outweigh his material aspirations, and his disgust and fear of American social evolution is embodied in Hank Morgan, the master enchanter who manipulates the good-hearted boys with theoretical ideas about the impending battle and the abstract prospects of resulting social change.

The fifty-two boys' intuitive reservations counter Twain's recognition during the 1880's that there was no such thing as a unitary society in America, leaving him with the choice to write either "for the Head" or "the Belly and the Members" of American society (Kaplan 270). The fifty-two boys' plea suggests Twain's romantic hope for a compassionate, unitary society. The English nation is a body as a whole

and cannot be dismembered as Hank dismembers it in theory. In contrast to his industrial aristocracy, Hank Morgan's rhetoric resounds with Gilded Age populist and socialist radicalism that called for the overthrow of the existing economic and social orders. Although Twain entertained some populist sentiments, his economic and social ideals were steadily conservative and opposed left-wing agitations; Twain's ideal society was based on ideals of unity and love expressed in the fifty-two boys' plea to Hank Morgan.

At the beginning of the battle, The Boss blows up all of his civilization-factories, destroying the machinery of his own faith. When a sea of knights attack his fortress in Merlin's cave, Hank Morgan wonders at the picturesque sight of his attackers, but he maintains a strangely objective distance from the destruction he witnesses. When they reach the garden of dynamite bombs laid in the sand belt, the mounted knights "shot into the sky with a thunder-crash, and became a whirling tempest of rags and fragments" (CY 433). After the smoke clears, Hank Morgan observes,

As to destruction of life, it was amazing. Moreover, it was beyond estimate. Of course we could not count the dead, because they did not exist as individuals, but merely as homogenous protoplasm, with alloys of iron and buttons" (CY 432).

To the extent that Hank Morgan sees the war as against the nation as a whole, it is no surprise he cannot see individuals. His maniacal

destruction of his enemy is an enemy in theory, an enemy that opposes and supposedly contradicts his ideals. His objective, yet graphic, scientific evaluation of the result of his first battle suggests the heartless reductionism with which he views human life and contrasts vividly with his boys' identification with the flesh and bone of their nation. Despite the nation's rejection of The Boss's modern, technological society, the English Nation affirms the value of that "manhood" which his utopian civilization is designed to resurrect.

A blind adherent to his failed dream of a republic, Hank Morgan embodies a tragic failure of vision. Inspecting their fortress after the first wave of fighting, Hank and Clarence search for signs of the enemy. Uncertain whether or not he sees a row of human heads, Hank observes, "you can't depend on your eyes when your imagination is out of focus" (CY 436). Hank Morgan literally fails to see humanity in his imaginary vision. Hank recounts that "Even the dim light in the cave had disordered our eyesight somewhat. . ." (CY 437). Outside the cave, in darkness, The Boss's enemy threatens the final, lighted outpost of his civilization, but Hank's marvelous technology disorders his eyesight. The Boss is deceived by his own blind faith in technological progress. Twain underscores Hank Morgan's failure of vision insofar as it is dominated by his blind faith in the machinery of his utopian, industrial civilization and excludes perception of the "manhood" upon which the success of his dream republic rests.

Mid-way through the Battle, Hank Morgan suffers a crisis of conscience. Before exterminating the overpowered knights, Hank Morgan

attempts to avoid the further destruction with an offer of surrender. After Clarence laughs at Hank's offering and play-acts the likely rejection of it, Hank Morgan realizes his error:

How empty is theory in the presence of fact! And this was just fact, and nothing else. . . .I tore up the paper and gave my mistimed sentimentalities a permanent rest (CY 435).

Incensed that the insurgent knights do not possess reason enough to surrender, Hank Morgan rejects his conscience and effectively chooses to destroy the remains of knight errantry despite his sentimental impulse to end the battle.

After the battle, Hank Morgan indulges one of his "mistimed sentimentalities". Despite Clarence's protests, he shuts off the current in the electric fences, goes to attend to the wounded, and he is stabbed by Sir Meliagraunce. His action implies that benevolent human nature occurs in everyman and supports the notion that he intends well. While Hank Morgan is only injured, his revolution is dead. Surrounded by twenty-five thousand rotting corpses, Clarence observes:

We were in a trap, you see -- a trap of our own making. If we stayed where we were, our dead would kill us; if we moved out of our defences, we should no longer be invincible. We had conquered; in turn we were conquered. The Boss recognized this; we all recognized it. (CY 443)

Metaphorically, the force of machine technology and progress is doomed by the dead it leaves in its wake. Not only does progress consume the humanity and the lives of those it affects, but it threatens the lives and humanity of those who direct its path. Rational, scientific progress reduces human life to machinery or corpses on both sides of the fence. In conquering an army fighting for the traditional ideals of human civilization, Hank Morgan conquers his only hope for human progress; in turn, he is conquered.

Hank Morgan's recognition, "How empty is theory in the presence of fact," functions as the prologue for the novel. In context, Hank's realization reveals his momentary lapses of common sense. Though unconscious of his own failures, Hank Morgan suffers the disillusionment that, unlike machines, human beings are neither perfectible nor consistently reasonable. He attempts to apply a rational, mechanistic scheme to the transformation of sixth century England, but civilization is not a machine and does not work even if, in theory, all the cogs are in the right places.

In light of the novel as a whole, Hank Morgan's recognition cuts to the heart of Twain's ambivalence concerning aristocracy and democracy. Twain maintained two fundamentally opposed ideals in his observations of history. On the one hand he believed that "inequalities are infinite" and that government is best entrusted to men of achievement, education and "manhood," an intangible sense of human nobility and compassion. Despite Twain's democratic ideals, aristocracy, in theory, represented a sensible and logical form of

government. On the other hand, Twain entertained the hope that democracy would enable human society to achieve its divinely ordained human equality and community. But, according to his observations of nineteenth century democracy in practice, Twain feared that the average man was incapable of governing himself in his own best interests. For both monarchy and democracy, Twain discovered that theory was empty in the presence of fact. Ultimately, Twain's dismay occurred from his observation that human society consistently fails to maintain its divine nature within human society. To the extent that neither aristocracy nor democracy provided evidence to prove its' theoretical purpose, both fail and lead Twain to question, as he did in his subsequent work, the very existence of a just and reasonable God. In its bleakest vision, *A Connecticut Yankee* challenges not only the teleological theory that mankind is capable of moral improvement but also the existence of God and a moral universe.

The Battle of the Sand Belt represents the force of blind faith in industrial technology taken to its logical extreme and finalizes *A Connecticut Yankee* as a cautionary fable. The Battle of the Sand Belt portends the potential outcome of industrial progress in the hands of visionaries like Hank Morgan. His revolution ploddingly succeeds killing one knight after another, dead friends killing friends, in fact. Hank notes that "one thing seemed to be sufficiently demonstrated: our current was so tremendous that it killed before the victim could cry out" (CY 438). Technological progress kills silently revoking the manhood from man one at a time, and, further, the Church offers no protection against what Twain feared was a possible future for

industrial technology. Faith proved to be no match for the power of modern machines which literally and figuratively dehumanize their victims, including Hank Morgan, without their notice. Furthermore, Twain's irony extends to the very reason upon which nineteenth century America's hope for civilization's moral improvement rested. Faith in secular rationalism is no more reasonable than faith in God, the king or Merlin's magic of fol-de-rol.

In the wake of the battle's destruction, Merlin infiltrates the cave disguised as a starving, old peasant midwife, and casts The Boss into a thirteen century sleep. Merlin, the agent of human superstition, emerges as the final conqueror. While the magic of science diminishes the magic of fol-de-rol, human superstition remains unconquered. In part a plot device to return Hank Morgan to the nineteenth century with his narrative, Merlin's victory testifies to enduring human superstition that undermines the theory of progress across centuries. Finally, science dehumanizes Merlin, but Merlin dies laughing. His petrified laugh stands to challenge rational attempts to reduce human nature to tangible, mechanical concepts. Merlin can be killed, but Merlin can not be conquered. Superstition, beliefs based on human desire for meaning, is unquantifiable and, in this fable, more powerful and lasting than the progressive political and economic values advocated by Hank Morgan. While rationalism can account for tangible phenomena, it is powerless to explain human behavior which stands outside the limits of Hank Morgan's rationalism.

Chapter III

The Battle of the Sand Belt renders Hank Morgan's dream of a republic on the American plan impossible.. Hank Morgan destroys his own sixth century, industrial civilization. Democracy, freedom and equality all perish as the result of Hank Morgan's monomaniacal ambition and blind adherence to his faith. His abstract, high-minded ideals blind him to the contradictions between his actions and his rhetoric, and his love of effect and determination to win lead to thoughtless, unconscionable human slaughter. In contrast to chivalric battles between men on equal footing, modern war exemplifies far greater destructive capability in the hands of no more enlightened men. Industrial progress is material progress, but it fails to engender moral progress.

Henry Nash Smith considers the Battle of the Sand Belt to be one of the most disturbing scenes in American literature. He found "the violence of the catastrophic ending . . . so disturbing that [he was] tempted to seek a psychological explanation for it" (Smith, *Writer* 168). He believes that "the raw aggression expressed in Mark Twain's description of the slaughter of the knights reveals a massive disillusionment and frustration" (Smith, *Writer* 169). In foregrounding his argument, Smith contends that Twain "had planned a fable illustrating how the advance of technology fosters the moral improvement of mankind" and that "some force other than his conscious intention convinced him that his belief in progress and human perfectibility was

groundless" (Smith, *Writer* 170). Smith further contends that Twain "had identified himself with Hank Morgan more and more fully in the course of the story . . ." (Smith, *Writer* 169). I, however, complicate this argument with the idea that Hank Morgan is the object of Twain's satire.

From the beginning of the novel Twain undermines Hank Morgan by contrasting his sophisticated, genteel pretenses with his simplistic, vernacular beliefs. Furthermore, Hank exemplifies many of Twain's most ardent objections to Gilded Age culture: the narrow ambition to wealth and social status of robber-baron industrialists, and the shameless corruption of politicians and political bosses. Twain, the practical aristocrat, scorned Hank Morgan's hubris and set him up as an all-American, vernacular hero only to tear him down. Finally, *The Battle of the Sand Belt* is disturbing because Twain intended for it to disturb. Although Twain undoubtedly experienced frustration and disillusionment during the course of writing *A Connecticut Yankee*, Smith overemphasizes the magnitude and effect of Twain's unconscious intention and slights his conscious intent.

Hank Morgan's monomaniacal zeal and his defeat in the battle function as a sucker punch. And Hank Morgan is both the sucker and the punch. Twain used American society's proudest vernacular attributes and democratic ideals to draw sympathetic attention to Hank Morgan and, in turn, extended those ideals to their logical and diabolical extremes in order to shock and shame American society into re-evaluating its collective, adolescent pride in the ideology of progress.

In opposition to Henry Nash Smith's criticism of the novel, William Dean Howells praised *A Connecticut Yankee* as "charming, original, wonderful -- good in fancy, and sound to the core in morals" and *The Battle of the Sand Belt* as "Titanic!" (Kaplan 301 & Smith, *Writer* 169). Henry Nash Smith dismisses Howells' delight in the scene "by ascribing to [him] an invincible innocence" (Smith, *Writer* 169). The incongruity between Smith and Howells' responses leaves a lacuna. Smith contends that:

the writing of this fable coincided with and perhaps precipitated in Mark Twain something like a negative conversion, a loss of faith in progress and human perfectibility which all but paralyzed his powers of imagination and condemned him to the relative sterility of his last twenty years. (Smith, *Fable* 3)

During the 1880's, William Dean Howells was vehemently critical of the popular sentimental romances and dime novel fictions, categorizing both as "injurious" literature (Trachtenberg 199). Howells feared that sensational fiction would destroy the boundary between real and fictional life. Howells surely applauded an 1878 *Scribner's Monthly* editorial concerned with the anti-social tenor of popular press fiction. Beyond the fantastic tales about "Indian warfare, California desperado life . . . horrors, the life of vagabond boys," the *Scribner's* editorial especially feared the adverse social effects of:

typical characterizations of authority: 'all teachers, of course, are sneaks and blackguards'; 'fathers and sons are natural enemies'; vagabond life is 'interesting and enticing,' while 'respectable home life . . . is not depicted at all'. (Trachtenberg 198)

For Howells, who at bottom believed in a moral universe, popular fictions "expressed . . . a mass consciousness at profound odds with realism, with culture itself. (Trachtenberg 200). Based on his conception of "republican equality and solidarity[,] " Howells saw "how untenable the concept was fast becoming in the face of a rigidifying class structure and open class strife -- how fragile the supporting moral universe seemed to be against social injustice and mechanization . . . " (Trachtenberg 200)

In *A Connecticut Yankee*, Twain, with a subscription book audience nearly as large as that of dime novels, addresses Howells' concern with the social ramifications of realism and mimics dime novel conventions in order to reach America's middle and lower classes (Trachtenberg 190). The episodic plot is fantastic, satirizes emblems of wealth, traditional authority and culture, and depicts sensational violence. Like dime-novel westerns, *A Connecticut Yankee* employs electric wires, guns and dynamite in Hank Morgan's battle of civilization against savagery. Rather than taming the wild west or avenging the cruelty of evil Eastern industrialists and bankers, Hank Morgan wars against the traditional ideals of America's European past. Hank Morgan's customary rhetoric blends populism with fervent Americanism and suggests the political

ramifications implied in his battle of civilization against savagery, and technology and reason against superstition. When Hank Morgan describes his nineteenth century civilization booming under the very nose of Arthurian England, he borrows an important image from the popular press:

There it was, as sure as a fact, and as substantial a fact as any serene volcano, standing innocent with its smokeless summit in the blue sky and giving no sign of the rising hell in its bowels. (CY 82)

Following the violent labor disputes during the Gilded Age, the image of a volcano came to represent American society's growing fears of social unrest. Furthermore, "the association of social unrest and the imagery of technological violence, of new city crowds with ignorance and contempt for culture fired the imagination with a nightmarish narrative of impending apocalypse" (Trachtenberg 48). In *A Connecticut Yankee*, Twain confabulates the social, historical and philosophical elements common to Arthurian England and Gilded Age America in order to assess the relative moral progress of industrial civilization. Twain concludes his acute, ironic fable of the rise and fall of American civilization with his own apocalyptic vision in which mechanization takes command.

A Connecticut Yankee subverts the serialized story paper genre and disguises Twain's middle class moralism for the mass reading public. While the novel ridicules genteel manners and cultural attitudes, it raises Hank Morgan to vernacular hero, champion of the working and

middle classes. Through Hank Morgan's rise to The Boss and his subsequent Promethean fall, Twain preaches to the American uncultivated classes and concludes with a plea that re-enforces genteel culture's vision of America in the image of middle-class respectability.

While *A Connecticut Yankee* does not advocate specific social or political action for man's improvement, it makes a conventional sentimental appeal to its nineteenth century American audience to reconsider its values. In a seemingly incongruous development of his character, Hank Morgan marries Sandy. The novel quietly portrays his growing affection for her, but the detail of his marriage is recapitulated after the fact. Hank's marriage is contrary to his primary motivation to the extent that there is no profit in it. Hank recalls,

I was a New Englander, and in my opinion this sort of partnership would compromise her sooner or later . . . Now I didn't know I was drawing a prize, yet that is what I did draw. Within the twelvemonth I became her worshipper; and ours was the dearest and perfectest comradeship that ever was. (CY 407)

Based on customs of chivalry and the social morality of nineteenth century America, Hank Morgan emerges as a blushing and dutiful father and husband. He finds value in marriage and fatherhood beyond power, status and profit. In fact, he attains the "divine" realm in his marriage that he had hoped to reach in his utopian dream for sixth

century England (CY 407). Hank Morgan's response to marriage and fatherhood reflects Twain's predilection for genteel social conventions. While rigid social training often manifests ambiguous results, Hank Morgan's domestication transcends purely earthly concerns. It is unambiguously perfect, and, in the end, it is Hank Morgan's greatest loss.

A Connecticut Yankee challenges its audience to imagine an alternative future to that of human catastrophe and suggests domestic harmony, a simple individual relation among family. The novel deflates nostalgic visions of a better time and utopian dreaming only to replace both with traditional, sentimental rhetoric. Despite his objections to the hypocrisy of genteel culture's ideals for reform, Twain upholds genteel culture's moralistic ideals for improving the future of American society. Political and economic reforms prove too vexing for Twain to reconcile so he resorts to American sentimental ideals to deliver a moral message diminishing Hank Morgan's world historical ambitions and replacing them with genteel culture's idealized notions of a middle-class paradise focused on family and home.

Mark Twain's tourist completes the "Tale of the Lost Land" the following dawn when "the world was gray and sad, and the exhausted storm was sighing and sobbing itself to rest" (CY 445). During the night, the rain has washed away the dream of olden time and leaves a somber cast. "The Lost Land" is lost, and the coming day is not bright. After completing Hank Morgan's narrative, the tourist seeks the stranger who

alights "in an instant with pleasure, gratitude, gladness, welcome" at the tourist's word (CY 446).

Delirious and craving human contact, Hank Morgan takes the tourist's hand and mistakes him for Sandy. Without his revolutionary, democratic zeal, Hank Morgan finds peace and happiness in his illusion of Sandy's presence. More valuable than his industrial civilization or his republic, Hank seeks comfort from his wife and child. Thinking he was sick, he speaks of strange and awful dreams, "dreams that were as real as reality -- delirium, of course, but so real!" (CY 446). He remembers the King's death, the extermination of chivalry and his travel across centuries as dreams, but he identifies himself as father and husband from the Lost Land. Still "a stranger and forlorn in that strange England", Hank Morgan bemoans his separation from Sandy, "with an abyss of thirteen centuries yawning between me and you! between me and my home and my friends! between me and all that is dear to me, all that could make life worth the living!" (CY 447). Within *A Connecticut Yankee's* attempt to portray a moral universe, Twain reveals his own overriding sentimentalism and affirms Hank Morgan's conviction that "a man is at bottom a man, after all, even if it doesn't show on the outside" (CY 297).

Waking from a thirteen century sleep, Hank Morgan experiences a conversion. All that makes life worth the living is the human value of friends and not aspirations to power and wealth. According to Gilded Age morality, his better moral nature manifests itself. Hank Morgan's death bed testimonial embraces genteel culture's ideals for social

reform. Sandy and, Hank's daughter, Hello-Central precipitate Hank Morgan's recognition of the higher purpose of life insulated from the competitive, masculine enterprises of politics, business and war.

In his lifetime, Twain sought and relied on the gentrifying influence of women and domestic harmony as a refuge from the hostile and alien American civilization. By asserting the "divine" realm of simple, domestic harmony, Twain, in effect, argues against the fashionable trappings of nineteenth century wealth, power and social status in favor of the more traditional ideals of family life. Though Twain derives the moral of the story from his own life, *A Connecticut Yankee* is not about him. *A Connecticut Yankee* is about the moral bearing of America's Gilded Age.

In concluding the novel, Twain left the future of American civilization open to possibility. The consummate showman, Hank Morgan, dies "getting up his last effect" (CY 447). Floating toward death and freedom from his pathetic drift between the eternities, Hank Morgan starts at an unheard sound, "'A bugle? It is the king! The drawbridge, there! Man the battlements! -- turn out the --' He died getting up his last 'effect;' but he never finished it." (CY 447).

In *A Connecticut Yankee*, Twain questions the progress of the human race but leaves open the possibility of a moral universe. Although Hank Morgan announces the entrance of the king, he heralds a leader who has not yet arrived and remains unseen. Hank Morgan's last effect portends two possibilities. On the one hand, the king could represent Gilded Age

America's kings -- industrialists, bankers and politicians who maintained aristocratic pretenses but failed to fulfill their just and reasonable promise. On the other hand, the king could represent the ideal warrior king, akin to Twain's rendering of King Arthur, who fights against injustice in defense of a moral universe. The implicit question -- who will lead? -- strikes at the heart of Twain's deist convictions. To the extent that Twain found little evidence in support of a moral universe, even in the highest of traditional human ideals, Twain faced the prospect of a God-less world and an amoral universe. Both Hank Morgan's horror at his dream of Camelot and his subsequent embrace of genteel, Victorian morality, and the ambiguity of his last effect reflect Twain's sentimentality and profound uncertainty concerning the future of American civilization and the human race.

Despite the preponderance of evidence to the contrary, Twain maintains a microscopic atom of faith in humans as inherently just and reasonable beings. The conclusion of *A Connecticut Yankee* prefigures the conclusion of *The Mysterious Stranger* in which No. 44 counsels and exhorts August Feldner: "I your poor servant have revealed you to yourself and set you free. Dream other dreams, and better! (MS 186). In *A Connecticut Yankee*, Twain pleads with nineteenth century America to do the same. Hank Morgan's last effect, however, remains unfinished.

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